RF/2/21/12

Qaddafi s Libya

Graduate Facylty New Schol for
Social research

New york

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1 A Perverse Revolution

At first sight – as at last – there is no revolution more contradictory and perverse than the Libyan. It enjoys the vast wealth of the oil-producing states in the Middle East, yet is determined not to be another Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. It claims a social revolution that will bring Libya into the company of the great twentieth-century revolutions for social liberation, yet it zealously pursues a revival of Islamic fundamentalism. It was a rebellion of young army men against the monarchical head of a religious order, yet the cast of its own political thinking is not secular but religious. It is a régime under which power is vested in eleven young soldiers, yet it boasts of having shepherded a popular revolution more mass-based than even China's. It has promoted a cultural revolution against bureaucracy and called on the popular masses to rise to their historic role, yet it suffocates any political action or thought not initiated by the state. It reviles the ancien régime for the corruption of the privileged classes that grew in the shadow of oil, and sees Libya today as a society without classes or social distinction, in which any tendencies towards inequality will be combated by a return to the true ethic of Islam. Yet even in rejecting the concept of class and class struggle as alien to Arab or Libyan socialism, it confronts the monopoly bastions of the capitalist world, the oil cartels. It is dedicated to pan-Arabism, yet has prompted the resentment, even the enmity, of Arab states, from the conservative shaikhdoms to the radicals, which it has reviled for their disparate approach to Arab unity. It buys Mirages from France for use in the 'national battle' for the liberation of Palestine, yet its leader Colonel Gadafi explains setbacks in this struggle and future tactics by passages in the Koran. Undaunted by the failure of previous attempts at unity between Arab states, it is seeking to

hector a combined state of Libya and Egypt to its feet, despite the seemingly insuperable problems of federating two countries of such diverse domestic cast and such contradictory diplomatic postures on the very issue supposed to weld their unity, the battle for Palestine.

Libya boasts a tiny population of under two million, so remote from the Middle East battle-lines as to offer only a marginal contribution; yet she pursues a recklessly activist policy from Malta to Ulster, from Uganda to Ethiopia and the Yemen. When Britain connived at the handing over to Iran of two small islands in the Persian Gulf, Libya promptly nationalized the local holdings of British Petroleum, Britain's principal oil interest there, as a reprisal. She has intervened in the internal politics of both Uganda and the Sudan, flying plane-loads of troops and arms into Uganda on the strength of General Amin's false representation of an invasion; and masterminding the forcing down of a plane carrying Sudanese revolutionaries, and a Libyan–Egyptian intervention in the Sudan to mount a counter-revolution. Some of her foreign policy initiatives have been on the strength of provocative miscalculations: the fulsome welcome to the army coupmakers in Morocco was broadcast round the world even as the coup against the King was failing. She has attacked enemies and allies with equal sense of righteousness, clearly disconcerting her closest partners as much as her antagonists. Thus, though combined with Egypt and Syria in a Federation, she has publicly pilloried their governments for betraying the *fedayin* cause. Ignoring the judgement of friends and the strengths of the enemy, Libya has courted a policy of confrontation with Israel which, taking into account the objective strengths and weaknesses of the two sides, is in danger of substituting rhetoric for purpose.

By any rational political analysis, the contradictions and misjudgements of the Libyan revolution should have brought its sallies grinding to a halt; yet its journeys into pan-Arabism and abroad on the African continent continue to show a surprising endurance. Gadafi's simplistic formula for a united Arab, African, Asian, and Latin American world, together with the reformed young in advanced capitalist society, is based pre-

The attempt should be to treat Libya as an intelligible whole. For whether or not Libya's example is relevant to other countries and systems, it has nonetheless to be understood and appreciated for having grown in its own climate.

certain difficulty :
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To discuss Libya necesary to offer seeveral levels of explanation:
1. to explian cee tain libya distinctions or peculaiities,
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Discuss the notion of the Oil rentier state
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Additionally Libyas own forms zrise from earlier distinctions,
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When ? a sore point.
Title : Libya : The Elusive Revolution.

The Oil story
Libya ijtoayed series rough negotiatong confrontations in which producers aseted their right to havea say in fixing oil prices..

I portant for libya - more revenue on less production dito rest arab world.

(GADAFI/ Do you mean that the representatives of the popular organisations should be elected by the people? Do you think that the people have reached a degree of consciousness where they could have free elections? Have you thought of the old days where votes were bought at the rice and cous-cous parties?)

In the ensuing months R.C.C. decrees dissolved women's associations and the lawyers' union.(15) Since the existing unions were said to be defunct, a new labour law(16) promulgated minimum work conditions and wage-fixing procedures and directed the Ministry of Labour to establish and supervise new unions. Union officials were named by decree on the recommendation of the Ministry after consultation with the workers and, later, elections were closely supervised. A workers' education centre was established to teach principles of trade unionism. It was a curious system of firm ministry guidance laid down by law but in part mitigated by the awareness of leading ministry officials that official protection and control was no substitute for independent workers' organisation. The unions were prohibited from affiliating to any 'foreign' trade union federation. Government employees other than labourers were not covered by the trade union law.

By the time the newspapers were instructed to initiate a public debate on the shape of popular organisation, the R.C.C. had made up its mind. The model was to be the Arab Socialist Union. This was the only authentic political form of the Arab revolution.(17) It took a national form but was based on 'pan-national' experience. It abolished differences between classes peacefully and avoided the tragedy of class struggle. It did not depend upon secrecy and underground cells. It enabled the application of socialism which guaranteed that no capitalist government or society would appear. Transplanting the Egyptian model the A.S.U. Charter defined the forces of the revolution as peasants, labourers, soldiers, intellectuals and national capitalists and stipulated that at all levels fifty per cent of the members should be peasants and labourers. The national or non-exploiting capitalist was defined as one who did not exploit others, who earned his money by lawful means, who could use his capital efficiently, and who was subject to progressive taxation.(18) Membership was open to all Libyans over eighteen unless disqualified by order of the R.C.C. There was a fairly conventional organisational pyramid, from basic unit to national congress, with the addition that army and police organisations were to be formed and run under the R.C.C., and that the R.C.C. had perched itself on top of the pyramid as 'leading supreme authority of the A.S.U.'.(19) The initial committees were hand picked by the R.C.C. and instructed to organise the first elections, during which, in the absence of the

right to campaign on policy and ideological issues, it was not surprising that voters and candidates resorted, as in the past, to family and factional politics instead.

On the face of it the A.S.U. founding conference[20] placed no restraints on political expression but once again it was most revealing as a gauge of Gadafi's thinking and his style of demagogic politics and ruthless control of the base. At times the conference was a debate among equals; at other times Gadafi played schoolmaster to a class of recalcitrant pupils. He defined socialism as social justice:

> 'We want to progress and rid the people of poverty, hunger, backwardness, and ignorance. We call this socialism. A philosophical discussion on what constitutes socialism, communism, capitalism, society and cooperative society can be carried on by philosophers and thinkers. They can write books on the subject explaining the various doctrines. The ordinary people like us must search for progress and that is all... We want to attain progress in the manner that suits us. Communism suits some, while capitalism or socialism suits others. Theoretically speaking, socialism means here that nobody should have a lot of capital and be very rich and able to exploit the people. Socialism does not mean the final elimination of class differences. Such differences are essential to society. That is the law of life... Briefly, socialism means social justice. It is the middle road. It is the way to close gaps between the classes.'

Some delegates contradicted him boldly:

> SPEAKER/ True we need hospitals, schools and a very quick revolutionary and social transformation. However we must learn how to build a sound edifice...How can we build a pyramid at the top when the foundation is unsound? One day the pyramid will collapse.
>
> GADAFI/ This is not the heart of the matter.
>
> SPEAKER/ The duty of the revolution is to build freedom and democracy; that is the duty now.
>
> GADAFI/ You are mistaken... Suppose we want to make a decision affecting the workers. We want to consult the workers. The workers are influenced by their own interests. They would produce decisions that are unfair for the other sections of the people's working forces. The larger the number of people consulted, the more it is done at the expense of revolutionary transformation.
>
> SPEAKER/ The Prophet consulted his companions.
>
> ANOTHER SPEAKER/ I say democracy is not a problem because it is non-existent in Islam. When the mission of Islam began on earth, Almighty God spoke thus to Mohamed: 'Consult them about the matter. When determined rely on God.'

He laid down the law on the role of trade unions and their relation to the A.S.U.:

> 'Today's topic is the A.S.U.'s relationship with the trade unions - all unions and not just workers' unions. We must determine the relationship of all trade unions and federations within the framework of the A.S.U. We fixed this day for discussion of this topic but so far no one has given pertinent points on the daily relationship between the A.S.U. and the trade unions. If you have the answer to this question, fine. This answer should be given to the Congress secretariat, which in turn will hand it to a special committee to discuss your views. If the purpose is merely to speak over the microphone, we can bring 500 microphones so you can speak loud and clear. We are not entertainers, but representatives of the people. Our aim is to seek justice, not to speak over microphones. As I have

already said, whoever has an answer, an opinion, or a solution to the problem should write it down briefly and present it to the secretariat.

Finally, the A.S.U. is political work, a popular political organisation. The trade unions have nothing to do with politics - at notime and at no place. Trade unions and federations are professional organisations. It is A.S.U.members who engage in politics. It must be clear that trade unions and federations are professional organisations which tackle the problems of their members. Politics must be confined to the A.S.U. It is impermissible to conduct politics outside the A.S.U. in any union or profession. Otherwise, trade unions and federations would turn into political parties. Consequently, there would not be a single organisation for the people's working forces. There would be a group of political parties in the country.'

The A.S.U. was born dead. Shortly after its formation Gadafi made a speech at Sabrata of more than characteristic vehemence and frankness. He disclosed that he had left the command for three weeks because the revolution had failed to make strides. This was not his first attempt at resignation. Once before he had been persuaded by emotional crowds to continue as leader. He wished to remain in the service of the revolution but as soldier not leader. The revolution was failing because 'pecuniary lust is rooted in the hearts of officials'. The Free Officers, he said, had been living on their nerves for ten years doing secret work inside the armed forces. After the Revolution they had lost the right of private freedom. 'Nobody among us can go to a shop, sit in a coffeeshop, mix with the people...The ruling seats in the revolutionary era are not chairs but fire and embers.' He had resigned because his concept of the revolution differed fromthe revolution in its practice. The people were sunk in passivity. It was exactly what his radical critics were saying. The difference was that they saw the R.C.C. and its view of politics as the cause for bureaucratic sluggishness and popular alienation and apathy. The structure and rules of the A.S.U. made it less a popular political movement than a parallel administration, an adjunct to the machinery already run by the R.C.C. and the ministries on the local government level. The rigid direction of the R.C.C. had already suffocated all initiative in the civil service; the same fate awaited the A.S.U. And if despite all odds A.S.U. groups managed to develop a dynamism or a policy contrary to the R.C.C. conception it would without doubt face dissolution. How could you in any case, have participatory politics without the free contest of political ideas and groupings? This was to be the source of endemic strain between Gadafi and groups of urban and politically-minded individuals.

During the A.S.U. conference he had delivered a fierce attack on the Libyan intellectuals educated before the Revolution. Some had gone to Russia: 'Their case must be dealt with' he said. 'They either convince us or we convince them; they either imprison us or we imprison them...' Others had studied in Arab countries, some in Damascus, others in Iraq and still others in Lebanon.

> 'At that time, the Ba'th Party, a nationalist party, wanted to unite the Arab world. Young Ba'thists used to say: Your country is reactionary and ruled by the Americans, the British and the monarchy. Our party must operate in your country because some Libyans are Ba'thists. I knew the Ba'thists by name.
>
> 'The peasants and workers, members of this congress, do not know anything about Ba'thists, Arab nationalists, communists or others. Only the intellectuals know them; those who have studied in the United States, Britain, France or elsewhere. Their culture became Western. Because they studied the capitalist economy, they defend Western liberalism and other ideas...We want to establish a group of educated people to be the backbone of the A.S.U. But this backbone must be purely Arab which has faith in and is loyal to the legacy of the Libyan Arab and the Arab nation. It must also be sincere in expressing the nation's requirements for its independent future and in preserving its character and nationalism. We shall not allow suspect elements with a black record to mislead the Libyan masses and to kick the A.S.U. sometimes to the Right and sometimes to the Left.'

The Moslem Brotherhood was not acceptable either since it functioned conspiratorially.

The A.S.U. conference was barely concluded when the R.C.C. decreed a law[21] making the A.S.U. the only legal political organisation in the country and declaring that all party political activities were treasonable. Anyone who advocated or established a political group, whether secretly or publicly, would be subject to the death penalty. Anyone who had knowledge of such grouping and failed to report it was subject to imprisonment for not less than ten years. The R.C.C. would convene special courts to try offenders.

There was the fear that others would steal the army-made revolution; and the fear of radicalism. There was also the hangover of the frustration engendered by the factional disputes of Middle East politics; and the army's traditional anti-intellectualism and its contempt for civilians. The effect of this running fire directed at political groups and ideology frightened even non-party adherents into withdrawal from public activity. The government's official organ Al-Thawra was shut down by Gadafi in a fit of impetuosity: it was badly written, its editorials were unsound, why did the intellectuals not write for it, he railed? But anyone not in direct or indirect government service had been intimidated into silence. Students who had started as enthusiasts for the revolution were disconcerted by Gadafi's stress on the religious content of the revolution. At the beginning of 1972 the R.C.C. staged a confrontation with the student organisation by refusing to admit certain duly elected delegates to the impending student conference and to permit any autonomous student organisation. The students struck in protest. The dispute was conciliated but the anti-strike measure that followed affected students equally with workers in the public sector. Side by side the R.C.C. encouraged a rival officially-inspired Nasserist student organisation.

After the A.S.U. conference the civilian ministers tendered their resignations. It took some months for a new cabinet to be formed and some of its members were appointed without their prior agreement. Gadafi tried to

turn this reluctance to enter government into a virtue. It distinguished them from the ministers of the defunct regime who had hung on to office at all costs. He revealed that every one of his ministers had submitted his resignation 'many times'. He read a letter from the ministers suggesting the next crop be appointed from the ranks of elected organisations, presumably the A.S.U., seeing this was the only legal political body. It was a case of ministers still carrying responsibility without power. They had seen the politicians of the previous regime on trial for actions and policies of a regime they could not closely influence; who could tell how permanent any regime was and how remote the day they too might be called to account?

It was true that there had always been a political vacuum in Libyan politics due in part to monarchical control but principally to the economic feebleness of the middle class which constitutes the politics of other Middle East states and the failure of this class to displace more traditional modes of production and political life. Oil was ushering in a new middle class; the Revolution interrupted the process and then froze the independent activities of this strata perhaps temporarily, the better to permit the army to control the process and its proceeds. To those who pressed for democratic structures, for constitutional forms of participation rather than Gadafi's style of guided democracy by public session, and for a political programme representing the needs of the people, Gadafi's riposte was 'You are imagining the people. You talk about the people, but what do you know? We are the people. The Free Officers, the sons of poor families, were the embodiment of the people. Power that accrued to them meant power to the people.' It was the Nasserite form of populism as an ideology, as a political movement, and as a legitimation of the power of the R.C.C.

But Gadafi went further than Nasser, the grand exemplar of state-initiated politics, in seeing politics as true religion controlled by the religious state:

> 'You are a true Moslem, Mr. President. What is the role played by religion in your private life? What is the relation between your religious consciousness and the political decisions you have made? There is no contradiction between religious consciousness and political decisions.'(23)

Gadafi's view of religion as politics meant that setbacks tothe Arab cause were attributable to human corruptibility, to a failure of true belief, to a departure from the moral principles of Islam. This approach reduces social and political action to the level of spiritual commitment, and the pursuit of policy to a highly individual crusade. While few if any of the army officers around Gadafi shared his religious fanaticism, their notion of politics was likewise religious rather than secular. Gadafi's obfuscations served to mystify his public statements, even to render them ridiculous. 'Here', he told the Le Monde correspondent:

> 'read the Koran or re-read it. You'll find the answers to all your questions. Arab unity, socialism, inheritance rights, the place of women in society, the inevitable fall of the Roman Empire, the destruction of our planet following the intervention of the atom bomb. It's all there for anyone willing to read it.'(24)

Politics was reduced to revelation and fatalism; and statesmanship to canny reading and memorising of the texts. Since theIslamic ethos is essentially universalistic and egalitarian, preaching the equality of all believers regardless of difference of wealth or occupation, it deliberately ignores the economic structure and minimises its social significance, and inhibits the emergence of a view of society as class defined. This of course coincides unerringly with the middle of the way ideology of the petit-bourgeoisie which characterises the army regimes of the Middle East, and whose growth is so stimulated by the expansion of the state machine and the state-directed economy.

The Gadafi style of religious philosophical debate was next institutionalise on the Supreme Council for National Guidance, which, together with the principal planning body, fell directly under the R.C.C. and under Gadafi's chairmanship. On this body mufti from many corners of the Arab world joined Libyans, hand picked as usual, in a search for a philosophy of the revolution and a universal theory. It was on this body that shar'ia law, its interpretation according to the Koran, and its applicability to the modern world was debated. Following these debates theR.C.C. promulgated a group of Islamic laws including one for the punishment of thieves and armed robbers(25) by the amputation of hand and foot. The law contained a battery of qualifying and exceptional clauses which made its general application unlikely but it observed the principle that the letter of the Koran is as relevant today as it was in the seventh century though amputation, according to article 21, was to take place by medical surgical methods including anaesthesia. There had been debate, even mild dissension, but solely within the context of state and religion as interchangeable and the Koran as the basis of law, which meant that debate was reduced to religious semantics. Did thecutting of the hand of the thief in fact mean 'interrupting' the hand, as some argued, by removing temptation, social pressure and conversion, or did it mean amputation? Judges, mufti, newspaper columnists and linguistic experts debated the issue on television. The most literal interpretation prevailed.

Soon Gadafi was ready to launch his Third Theory. It steered an alternate, middle course between capitalism and communism, but had essentially to be based upon religion. He propounded it not only for Libyans but for the Arab world and the world as a whole.(26) The failures of the 'isms' of both east and west had given rise to the need for a third alternate theory. This was based on

the attorney-general's office and the Tripoli Chamber of Commerce, younger members of prominent coastal families, most of them, seemingly, individuals identified in the past with Marxist, Baathist, Moslem Brotherhood or other such political circles. There had never been any suggestion that 'factional' organisation existed; the persecution was aimed at individuals who had not succeeded in identifying with the regime's system of state-run politics. The cultural revolution was against people who 'propagate poisonous ideas' alien to the Islamic origins of the Libyan people. The political prisoners were held incommunicado. Unofficial circles calculated that there had been as many as a thousand persons arrested; this, at the rate of one in prison for every 20,000 Libyans made the country the most politically volatile in the world.

Side by side with the arrests popular committees were appearing, mostly in university faculties and other educational institutions, to remove bureaucrats and 'passive and obstructionist elements'. Their actions were to be confirmed by the R.C.C.; meanwhile a tussle for control of the committees seemed to be developing between the Ministry of Education and the Arab Socialist Union. Some observers saw in the cultural revolution the first expression of popular initiative and the first attempts of the lowly to bring down hierarchies of authority. But popular committees were precluded from operating within government ministries, the bastions of bureaucracy. Student committees removed staff, censored text books and tried to revise their courses; other committees pruned the stock of a few bookshops and demoted men in executive positions in para-statal bodies. In Benghazi students waded into the congestion at the docks and claimed to devise a system that would clear the backlog; Tripoli agricultural students marched out of classrooms and towards agricultural schemes on the land. It was difficult to know how sustained this movement would be, and what results it would produce, within the limits of the system of R.C.C. supervision, and proceeding as it did side by side with police repression, and as one of its instruments.

By now Libya's internal security apparatus, modelled on Egypt's and installed by members of Egypt's mghabariet comprised several overlapping but autonomously directed intelligence machines. After the arrest of one group suspected of counter-revolutionary plotting there had been disclosures of torture by soldiers commanded by Free Officers. (It was considered too dangerous to bring them to book, for this might split the army.) Less sensational but more pervasive was the system of informers and the emergence of groups of organised government supporters who played a strategic if sycophantic role carrying out the tenor of Gadafi's speeches to the letter, and reporting to him only what they knew he wanted to hear. The popular committees had both a positive and negative aspect: on the one hand they might very well succeed in provoking a response from ordinary people within the limits of manoeuvre allowed by the R.C.C. on the other they could be equivalent to the security apparatus, denouncing and rooting out any who had doubts about the methods of the army regime.

The first so-called development agencies functioned under the direct supervision of Libya's foreign creditors. Thus the Libyan Public Development and Stabilisation Agency (LPDSA), set up in March 1952 under the Libyan Public Development and Stabilisation Agency Law of 1951, was run by funds paid over by western governments, and its powers were vested in a board composed of members appointed by these same governments. It was this Board which gave final approval to the annual economic plan. LARC (the Libyan-American Reconstruction Commission) was set up in 1955 to supervise projects paid for by American money; this was the period during which grants direct from the United States government shot up to outstrip not only British subsidies but the combined total of subsidies from British and international agencies.[4] The Libyan government was barely consulted by the aid agencies, perhaps on the indisputable ground that as Libya could pay for nothing herself her intentions could safely be disregarded.

The World Bank surveyed the Libyan economy in 1958-9. Its report placed special emphasis on the development of agriculture - though its recommended expenditure programme entailed expenditures of barely over £ 1million a year. But although the World Bank report was presented several months after the first major oil find, it seemed unable properly to evaluate the likely impact on Libyan agriculture, and its recommendations were based on entirely unrealistic assumptions. No sooner had it been written than the massive report of pages dropped into oblivion.

With the coming of oil the bilateral aid agencies were dissolved and replaced by a libyan Development Council. The first development plan was for 1963 to 1968. (It was extended for a further year to 1969 when the second plan was inaugurated, to be interrupted by the September coup.) As pipelines coursed through the desert government revenues rose spectacularly. By 1966 there was, for the first time in the country's history, a surplus of revenue over expenditure. The closure of the Suez Canal induced a still more sensational rise in oil revenues. Beside oil money Libya's other sources of revenue were derisory :

Summary of Government Revenues
(m. Libyan £s)

	Actuals				1970/1		1971/2
	1966/7	1967/8	1968/9	1969/70	Budg.	Actual	Budget
Oil Revenues	268.5	191.0	279.4	363.4	468.7	469.1	560
Non-Oil Revenues Incl. Customs duties; rates; public utilities.	53.3	58.5	79.1	83.6	77.6	82.7	72.3

Libya's economy had become one of the fastest-growing in the world. At independence the average income of the population was £15 a year. By 1970 it had risen to close on £600 per head. As in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia it was a precipitate leap from rags to riches. Suddenly this state began to accrue such handsome reserves that however profligate it seemed impossible for the country to bankrupt itself.

Until oil eight out of every ten Libyans lived as nomads or by agriculture. The country's modern farms were largely owned and managed by Italians and Libyan agriculture was mostly subsistence except for cereals and livestock which produced marketable surpluses in good years. Rainfall determined agricultural production which was thus both limited and unpredictable so that there was substantial seasonal unemployment, often more like permanent underemployment. In spite of this agriculture was the backbone of the economy. It engaged about 70 per cent of the active labour force and produced about 60 per cent of the gross domestic product. Exports consisted mostly of agricultural products. When oil revenues became available, ambitious plans were made to develop the agricultural sector.

The consequences of oil for the economy have been graphically described by Ali Atigah, then Libya's Minister of Planning and Development.[5] He has shown how money supply increased rapidly, this concentrated in the main urban centres. Whereas agriculture had been the only means of livelihood for the great majority of the population, oil opened up easier and more lucrative sources of employment. There was a rapid wave of migration from the countryside to the coastal towns. The rush for the proceeds of oil attracted far more people off the land than the oil industry could absorb. The result was crowded urban centres but deserted farmland in many parts of the country. A side result was the sudden increase in the demand for food in the towns, as a result both of the increased urban population but also of the extravagant consumption by foreigners in the oil industry. This might have been a strong stimulus for agricultural production but the low state of technology in agriculture made this impossible. In any event, there were higher profits on investment in the trade and service sector of the economy. So both capital and labour continued to move away from agriculture.

> 'With this movement' writes Atigah 'Libyan agriculture was left to stagnate in its low level of development and the consumer turned to the world markets for the purchase of his daily food. Oil-

induced prosperity provided him with essential income for such purchases and it also provided the country with the essential foreign exchange for significantly increased imports. At the beginning of oil exploration the total value of imported food and food produce was about £L.5 million. By 1968 it was £L.27.6 million. On the other hand agricultural exports had declined from a value of £ 11.23 million in 1956 to £L.600,000 in 1961, and to only about £L.32,000 in 1968. This was not enough to pay for Libya's import of food for one-third of a single day.'

From here on the circle grew even tighter. Imported food became an easy alternative to the development of domestic agriculture. Increased incomes and prices brought about by oil made agriculture even more inefficient by increasing the cost of labour.

'Such a situation' wrote Atigah 'clearly called for strong government intervention to subsidise agricultural production and protect rural income. But unfortunately such a policy could not be followed at the proper time because of two basic limitations. The first was simply lack of public funds, with which to support a large-scale programme of agricultural subsidies. The second was the necessity to keep food prices as low as possible, in the face of an inflationary situation, created by the injection of funds by the oil companies. As the Libyan consumer became more and more dependent on imported foodstuff, tariffs became less and less applicable as a means of protecting domestic agriculture. Moreover, the Treasury was at that time heavily dependent on customs duties as a form of indirect taxation. Thus between 1955 and 1962, a situation was created in the economy which led to a drastic decline in traditional agriculture. At the same time the introduction of modern agriculture could not take place,... because the level of agricultural skills was low and the level of earnings and profitability was much lower, even on efficient farms, than they were in trade, services and real estate. The government was unable to play a significant role in dealing with the situation, because it lacked the necessary skills and funds, as well as the determination to use fiscal measures to favour agricultural investment and discourage relatively unproductive activities, such as real estate speculation. Politically this was not feasible... and technically it was difficult to use modern fiscal and monetary instruments to redirect the allocation of resources towards agricultural development...

The result was the abandonment of traditional agriculture and nomadic activities in many parts of the country. Although the more modern farms... and mainly operated by Italians, remained in production, their relative position in the economy was rapidly deteriorating. Thus, during the period 1956-62, the economic forces released by the discovery of oil produced their greatest adverse effect on agriculture. The latter simply could not withstand the great pressure of economic forces generated by the injection of substantial funds in the urban areas.'

In Ali Atigah's view the worst effects of the impact of oil on agriculture were over by 1962, when the trend of agricultural production

began slowly to be reversed. Agricultural output crept up very slightly, but its importance was almost imperceptible beside the oil sector which grew so much faster. Oil was now laying down the characteristic patterns of the economy as seen in the disproportionate contributions of various sectors to the gross domestic product. Agriculture had shrunk dramatically. Manufacturing, as small as it had always been, had declined in relative importance though in absolute figures its contribution to gross domestic product had increased.

Sectoral Contribution to Gross Domestic Product in Percentages. 6

	(At Factor cost)	At constant 1964 prices		
	1962	1965	1968	1969
1. Agriculture	9.7	4.9	2.6	2.4
2. Petroleum and Quarrying	27.2	54.8	61.3	65.0
3. Manufacturing	5.6	2.6	2.2	2.0
4. Construction	7.1	7.0	6.9	5.6
5. Electricity and Gas	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4
6. Transportation	5.5	3.8	4.0	3.6
7. Trade	8.6	5.1	4.6	4.1
8. Banking and Insurance	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.2
9. Public Administration and Defence	9.7	7.4	7.4	6.8
10. Educational Services	3.2	2.6	2.5	2.5
11. Health Services	1.3	0.9	1.1	1.0
12. Ownership of dwellings	17.2	7.5	4.8	4.5
13. Other Services	3.3	1.7	1.1	0.9
Gross Domestic Product	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

This pattern was hardly to change in the ensuing years except to confirm itself. Thus the 1971 Government forecast figures were 70.9 per cent for petroleum; 2 per cent for agriculture and 1.4 per cent for manufacturing.

By the middle of the 1960's oil was providing funds on a scale that could in theory pay for a modernised agriculture; the problem was if and how this could be done. For whether this was recognised or not - and talking to planners and ministry officials active both before and after the September 1969 coup I would say clearly not - Libya was sharply up against the especially skewed form of under-development induced by the oil economy. Like the middle east oil producing economies she was afflicted with the wealth but also the problem of the Rentier State.

Rentier states, according to H. Mahdavy who demonstrates the case of Iran,[7] are countries that receive substantial amounts of external rents on a regular basis, paid by foreign governments or foreign concerns. Payments for the passage of ships through the Suez Canal (allowing for the operating and capital costs involved) are external rents. The same holds for payments to countries in the Middle East that have oil pipelines through their territories. Above all oil revenues received by governments of oil producing and exporting countries are external rents. The distinguishing characteristic of the rentier state is that 'the oil revenues received by the governments of the oil producing and exporting countries have very little to do with the production processes of their domestic economies. The inputs from the local economies - other than raw materials - are insignificant.' The turning point in the economic history of the Middle East was 1956 from when political developments in the region enabled Middle East governments to appropriate a larger share of the rents that accrued to the oil companies as profits. The public sectors in the rentier states began to receive rents on a scale that affected the pace and pattern of their economies to a degree previously unknown. These governments could thus embark upon large public expenditure programmes without resorting to taxation and without running into drastic balance of payments or expenditure problems. Since oil revenues typically increase at a spectacularly faster rate than the gross national product of local economies, the public sector of these couhtries expanded rapidly. The government became the dominant factor in the economy - and out of this, significantly, a special form of étatisme was to grow.

On its own,extensive government expenditure, Mahdavy writes, is not enough to generate rapid economic growth for 'all expenditures do not have

economy will remain relatively untouched by ~~these~~ such expenditures, however large. Government expenditures paid for by oil revenues need not produce any related expansion in the rest of the economy. For 'the danger that faces the Rentier state is that while some of the natural resources of these countries are being fully developed by foreign concerns and considerable government expenditures.. are creating an impression of prosperity and growth, the mass of the population may remain in a backward state and the most important factors for long-run growth may receive little or no attention at all. And this will produce social and political stagnation and inertia... If the country is to become more than a producer of raw materials, and growth is to be sustained then the entire socio-economic framework of the country has to undergo a transformation... The level of education of the population and their technological sophistication has to be raised considerably. Also the necessary political and administrative mechanism for mobilising national resources has to be devised.. The oil revenues offer unusual prospects for development precisely because they can make certain short-cuts in socio-economic transformation and long-range economic development possible.'

But as Robert Mabro shows in his application of the rentier state model to Libya[8], it is these very short cuts that pose the dilemma for the oil state. Libya the looted state suddenly became Libya the wealthy rentier state, but the economy remained dependent and under-developed. This is because the hallmark of the rentier state is the generation of an expensive product by an industry that employs very few people and very few local resources, so that popular participation in productive economic activity is extremely low. There is no nexus between production and income distribution, since revenues accrue directly to the government not through any production but from oil taxes which come from outside the economy. Government expenditures and development programmes become totally dependent upon oil revenues. Consumption patterns become geared to the use of imported commodities. There are no links between the proceeds of production, effort and incentive. The rentier state can achieve dramatic rises in per capita income without going through the social and organizational changes usually associated with the processes of economic growth.

state reverses the usual development process for instead of allowing the usual progression from agriculture to industry to services, oil provokes the growth of the third, services, sector only, directly in the shape of all the ancillary services that the oil companies need : accomodation, pipelines and storage tanks, supplies to the desert and provision for the army of workers, foreign and Libya; and then indirectly since this sector also expands rapidly as government revenues purchase the advantages of development : housing, infrastructure, education and administration. Why bother with productive investment when revenues are already guaranteed, the rentier state asks itself? Agriculture and industry therefore tend to stand still.

> Growth in the tertiary services' sector is clear evidence of wealth, but it is not a condition for development. It might seems that oil offers unlimited industrial use in the shape of fertilisers, plastics, detergents, natural gas and the whole range of petro-chemical products. But, writes Mabro, the paradox of development is that it presupposes from the start a certain stage of development; and wealth is not a simple substitute. Oil's potential use is invaluable, but it also makes it difficult to handle : the technology, the know-how, the organisation necessary for the exploitation of this versatile product, are highly complicated for a backward economy. The rentier state cannot straight away steer its efforts towards the development of its oil industry, for it begins the wrong way round with the tertiary services sector. Development for an oil-producing country must lie in preparing the way and speeding up the shift from the rentier state to the producer state.

The solution is for Libya, the rentier state, to use its oil to buy time for the training of human capital. How did the monarchy use oil and time?

> Once oil money was flowing abundantly it was decided that 70 per cent of oil revenues should be allocated for development projects. It was on this basis that the first Five Year Plan was drawn in 1963. The government overspent heavily on this Plan:

production so as to preserve the national oil wealth. (By now oil production had been cut back from daily production of barrels a day to but the lower production level was more than compensated for by the price gains of several rounds of bargaining with the companies.) Since oil was a wasting asset the Libyan economy had to be induced to reach conditions of self-sustained growth independent of the oil sector, within a period of twenty years. Pride of place were to be given to agriculture and to the building of a modern industrial sector. The combined allocations for industry, a petroleum industry and electrification, totalled close on £L.400 million or more than 34 per cent of the total planned expenditure. This is a 50 per cent increase compared with the amount allocated for industry and public works in the second 1969-74 development plan of the monarchy which was suspended by the army regime.

Development Plan

Allocation L£m

	1972-5	% total
Agricultural Agriculture and [redacted] Reform	165.000	14.2
Industrial and mineral projects	174.456	15.0
Petroleum	122.000	10.5
Electricity	103.000	8.8
Transport and Communications	163.780	14.1
Education and National Guidance	107.572	9.2
Public Health	47.000	4.0
Labour and Social Affairs	16.125	1.4
Housing and Utilities	124.762	10.7
Local Administration	99.000	8.5
Tourism	8.600	0.7
Information and Culture	15.410	1.3
Planning and Management	4.600	0.4
Projects reserve	13.090	1.2

In the three year 'rolling' development plan which is to spend £L.1200 million over three years, the productive sectors - industry, agriculture and electrification - are expected to grow by 15 per cent. Petroleum's growth on the other hand has been limited to seven per cent

so that other sectors will replace income from oil in the shortest possible time. Libya is to be made self-sufficient in food and animal production. The already existing Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for production on existing farming projects but a newly formed Ministry of State for Agriculture has been given £L.95 million over three years to reclaim and establish new farms on 550,000 hectares of new land. The country has been divided into four regions for purposes of agricultural development : Kufra and the area to the north of ~~Agdabir~~ Ajdabiya; the Jebel Akhdar ~~Plain~~ hill area and/Benghazi Plain in the east; the Jefara Plain in the west; and the Fezzan area. Each region will boast a complete regional development programme. Water supplies are a top priority. A series of ambitious projects are investigating re-routing water from the Nile into western Libya; a desalination project; a pipeline from the underground water supplies of the desert in the south. The Development Plan has also budgeted for a number of factories, ~~for~~ To produce cement, shoes, glassware, cables and electric wiring, batteries, fish and tomato canning. There are 30,000 houses under construction and a scheme for 30,000 more. Eleven new hospitals are to be built and 28,000 classrooms. The Industrial and Real Estate Bank has been allocated £L.28 million towards private construction loans. Under this Plan Libya is to launch her petro-chemical industry with two refineries, one for home and one for export consumption; there is to be a government complex for gas processing; and the nucleus of a commercial and oil shipping fleet. There are large harbour extensions works at Tripoli, Misurata and Derna; also projects for dams and public works. It is once again, open season for foreign contractors.

If intention were decisive, Libya could be well on the way to becoming a developed country, as well as a rich one. But no one in government, save perhaps an odd harassed planning minister and a handful of his experts, have grasped the need for, or been able to formulate, a concept of development to precede the expenditures.

Much that is characteristic about the styles of Libyan planning emerges from a broadcast live by Libyan Radio of a meeting between Colonel Qadhafi and agricultural specialists. This was in October 1971, when the first year of parsimonious conservation of reserves was well over and spending was in full flood, especially on agriculture. Counting the recesses in between the meeting lasted ten hours in all. Here, according to the report, is what happened :

In April 1973 an increased development budget of £L1,965million was announced for the period until the end of 1973, an increase of nearly 50 per cent over the revised three year budget issued four months earlier. The allocation for agriculture rose from £L240million in the earlier plan to £L416 million. Allocations for industry and mineral developments were raised from £L174million to over £L238 million.

'The meeting was characterised by lengthy explanations by Qadhafi who began the proceedings by recommending that the object was to have a useful exchange of ideas. He impressed upon his listeners his own ideas about Libyan agriculture touching on such subjects as scientific soil studies, studies on potential sources of water, optimum use of cultivable land, agrarian reform, poultry raising, production of honey and bee-keeping, modern agricultural storage facilities, fodder, irrigation and portable water supplies, farm machinery, agricultural institutes, agricultural loans, farm manpower, farm co-operation societies, veterinary centres, animal husbandry and vineyard cultivation.

Agricultural specialists then put forward their proposals during an interlude of about four minutes after which Qadhafi resumed speaking until the recess at 11.16 GMT.

The second session, which began at 12.40 GMT, consisted of questions put by Qadhafi to various specialists and their answers on specific agricultural subjects, the emphasis being on the need to develop agri agriculture on a scientific basis, with Qadhafi frequently interrogating the speakers on how their proposals could be put into practice. The discussion continued on its way until 16.50 GMT.

In the last session, which began at 19.15 GMT, the problems of water and how to get it, well drilling and forestry were discussed. Qadhafi then listened to complaints from various people, and wound up the meeting, which ended at 22.36 GMT, by saying that the material discussed would be analysed by a committee and a report submitted to him for action.' 10

Every ministry has its shelf of expert reports commissioned by one or other or both of the regimes. Advisers are falling over one another; consultants swarm all over the country. Expertise and consultancy hire is often an adjunct of foreign policy; where this is to give each of the big powers a showing and also to spread good relations and business between a scatter of small states and so-called neutrals, the expertise in the field has this same patchwork quality. At one point several different teams were investigating underground water resources,[11] some working the identical region, each apparently ignoring previous work done in the field. Some advice is good, some bad, most of it goes uninterpreted and uncoordinated. There have been experts on longterm secondment to ministries who have tried to evaluate the advice of consultants and to impress on government some over-arching concept of longterm development. But they are told that the analysis of expert advice and projection of planning priorities falls into the realm of policy-making. So the experts are herded off to their calculating machines and their blueprints and the Council of Ministers, but

effectively the RCC once again, takes over. In this body there is neither conceptualisation of the process of development nor the technical expertise to measure one set of advice against another. If experts have no power of decision nor do the trained planners in the ministries. At various times Colonel Gaddafy has convened sessions of the planning departments of his economic ministries and international experts have even on occasion been invited to meetings of the RCC devoted to planning, but his presence and his style have turned these sessions into a political forum. In any case longterm planning needs to be undertaken consistently and at working level and not in fits and starts to suit the political exigencies of the day.

The story of the making of the 1970-1 budget shows how makeshift much of the planning has been. Each government department was instructed to outline its projected activity for the following year together with its estimate of manpower and budget requirements, the relationship of one project to another, and to sources of raw material. The intention was that the individual plans would then go to the central planning authority for study and co-ordination. But the individual ministry plans were delivered too late for the central planners to do more than superficial pruning and to list them in sequence. In this condition the draft plan was forwarded to the RCC which reduced the budget by 15 per cent, and sent it back again. The previous budget had run its term on a surplus of cash and a crippling shortage of technicians; its successors will probably do the same.

This style of planning has encouraged every ministry to flex its spending muscles over as many projects as it can reach. Anywhere else but in an oil-rich state the planner's dilemma is to squeeze projects to fit the budget; in Libya ministries go in search of projects to spend their money. The definition by law of the percentage of revenue to be spent on development now serves not to guarantee minimal spending on development projects but to stimulate already feverish spending to new heights. If development means spending the race is on. The pattern of ambitious ministries fostering ever more ambitious schemes is now institutionalised procedure in Libyan planning.

One of the technical obstacles to long-range planning in Libya is that

hopes hang on the new census. But even here impatience and technical incomprehension at the top force unrealistic targets on those below. It is feared that the date for the census will be upon the country before adequate preparation for it has been made. Yet in other respects there is meticulous attention to detail. Ministries are now using accounting procedures for keeping the RCC posted with periodic progress reports of every single project in the Plan. Thus in 6-monthly follow-on reports a factory is recorded as having made 12 or 24 or 57 per cent progress; that is, that proportion of the allocation has been spent. There is very real concern about the rate of growth, and a great impatience to speed it up.

It is said perhaps apocryphally of the complaint of a minister of planning of the previous regime that in the country's expectancy of miracles after oil wealth there was no time to plan. Ministries were under constant pressure to spend and had neither time nor strength to prepare properly. Spending had to be seen to be done. This is probably even truer under the army regime. Major Jalloud, then minister in charge of production, now Prime Minister, told a press conference of foreign correspondents the reason why. It was natural, he said, for any military group to produce economic and social plans to effect a radical change. This was to convince its people and the world at large that it was not a movement aiming only at a seizure of power. This was the way army leaders could prove that they had led not a military coup d'etat but a revolution. This is really the central issue : has there been a radical change? is it a social revolution? are the economic policies of the new regime a departure from the economic strategy of the previous government or a continuation of it, however accelerated?

Every extravagant planning decision has committed the country to long-term spending and helps to skew its growth in a certain direction. Yet there is as yet no clear overall perspective for longterm planning. On paper there is a rich range of options. Agriculture or industry? Import-substituting industry or a petro-chemical complex? Horizontal or vertical agricultural expansion? A hydrological and technological evolution for mechanised agriculture? Or a concentration on the provision of jobs in the towns since a reversal of the rural-urban drift is unlikely? Should Libya's economic development, in Robert Mabro's terms follow the

likely a class of farmer proprietors would be encouraged.

The debate about the place of agriculture in overall development planning took place within a small circle of ministry officials and university agricultural specialists, the latter gravitating from ministry to their faculties and back again depending on the shifts in both agricultural and academic politics. Some Libyan agriculturalists are fanatical advocates of farming at all costs. 'If we worship God' one told me, 'next to religion is agriculture.' Gadafi clearly feels the same way. Agriculture is a duty. The other side argued that it was a romantic notion that people had to be kept on the land at all costs; it was in any case too late. Services taken to the countryside required enormous social investment; it would be cheaper to have piped water and electricity in expanded towns than spread over thousands of villages. It was essential they said, to clarify priorities for agriculture since there had always been yawning gaps between planning and performance with the budget for agriculture consistently under-used, and there were important reasons why. It was all very well plotting settlements on the map, but would there be farmers on the spot to man them? The sons of farmers who had migrated from countryside to towns were unlikely to return as farmers, for the cash rewards were too unequal. The graduates of the agricultural colleges were not farmers but administrators.

It was important not to make unrealistic assumptions about agricultural potential. The debaters ranged themselves in the vertical and horizontal schools : the verticals argued for manpower shortage reasons for raising the productive level of land already under cultivation, concentrating on proven areas round Tripoli, Wadi Ajar in the Fezzan and the Jebel Akhdar, on pilot schemes for better use of seed, pest control, fertilisers and mechanisation; and the horizontals advocated the use of extension of agriculture in all possible directions at the fastest possible case in order to spread investment to the further flung regions for social - and no doubt political - considerations.

Of the grand new agricultural schemes Kufra is the most prestigious. The Kufra story goes back to 1966 when Occidental oil company tendered for the country's most promising oil concessions and won them on a tender which promised to plough back 5 per cent of its profits into the economy through developing the water deposits in the Sahara whose discovery seemed as

felicitous as the company's prolific oil finds. In fact the existence of this huge body of underground water had been known for some time. Experts say that as fossil water it is not re-charging and cannot thus be replenished, but that this deep underground reservoir in the Nubian sandstone is so vast that it will not be depleted in centuries. There are, however, the sceptics among the experts who argue that the level of water has fallen in recent decades, that an isotype test to establish more exactly the age of the water is necessary before longterm development projects are initiated, and that none of the feasibility studies thus far undertaken have answered the crucial questions about the life and supply of the water. Having drilled the wells to reach the underground water Occidental's pilot project was an exercise in hydroponics. The soil is devoid of organic matter but careful balance of soil, water and chemicals by highly skilled imported technicians, some from desert 'miracles' in Arizona, grew several hundred acres of lush green alfalfa. Sheep were flown in by the Libyan airforce to feed on the crop and the desert agricultural project seemed launched on an experimental basis at least.

By the time the Gadafi regime came to power it was known that Occidental was not anxious to continue with the Kufra scheme. The future of foreign capital seemed uncertain, and though excited estimates of the watery miracle had appeared in the world's press, the economics of the scheme had always been vague and no accurate estimates for commercial exploitation had been made.

The first official visit to Kufra was six months after the RCC seizure of power, when the Minister of Agriculture came to see if the scheme looked as good as it was described; he was doubtful about the economic feasibility of the project. But by the end of the weekend Occidental management was told that the project was to be nationalised by the government. That week the Minister of Agriculture was not available for clarification; it was clear that this was a decision taken higher up.

For five months the future of the scheme hung in the air, The Ministry of Agriculture did not want to inherit the ambitious scheme without a comparable budget; it was aghast at the prospect of having to tackle the scheme at all, and as the ministries of agriculture and petroleum bandied finance issues from one to the other, Occidental executives had to force the issue to get a followup to the original nationalisation decision. The government take-over became official in mid-July. Occidental bowed out except for two senior experts seconded to the government, and the project

was put in the hands of the Kufra Agricultural Project Authority, a newly formed state agency under the Ministry of Agriculture. The period of indecision was over. It transpired that the key role was played by a young army officer and close associate of the RCC who was stationed in Kufra. He persuaded Gadafi himself to visit the project. The visit was the turning point for the Kufra project. From this time on agriculture in the desert became central to development plans. Large sums were voted to the Kufra scheme and ambitious expansion plans demanded; when these were delivered, the RCC pressed constantly for their enlargement and still further expansion.

Irrigated by an advanced system of pivot sprinkler units this mechanised farming deep in the desert is to serve as an enormous-scale lamb breeding and slaughter factory and to make Libya self-sufficient in meat. Western expertise called in on contract to scrutinise the project - a feasibility study was undertaken when it was already operational - have called it 'unique','remarkable', and 'technically feasible' though desert agriculture on the magnitude contemplated for Kufra has never been undertaken in a comparable environment. Are there no problems? Indeed, say the experts. The project must be allowed to operate with minimum hindrance - in procuring personnel, equipment and supplies and contracting for construction and services - from other echelons of government, otherwise the delicate logistics operation involved will surely fail. Thus wrote one report : 'Under present conditions of industrial and agricultural development in Libya all production inputs for irrigated agriculture including fertilisers, pesticides and improved seeds must be imported largely from Europe and North America. The same goes for all farm machinery, sprinkler irrigation equipment, spare parts and supplies including even baling twine. Any interruption in supply would mean massive crop losses and would disrupt the sheep production programme.' As for skilled personnel, in principle the recruitment of qualified management and expertise provides no insurmountable problem. At a price, that is. The experts have cautioned government that costs of training and recruitment will appear exhorbitant compared with costs for other development projects in the country, but without the right personnel, the project could prove a complete failure. In other words, given enough money and the readiness to purchase foreign skills and supplies at any cost, the scheme might work.

Critics have likened the Kufra project to shooting pigeons with rockets.

Pushbutton mechanised farming in the desert is excellent for prestige but, they ask, has anyone worked out the price to the Libyan housewife of a pound of mutton? Will the project pay in ten years, or fifteen? And meanwhile what effect will this massive sheep breeding project have on livestock husbandry in the rest of the country? The strongest argument against the project is its inaccessibility. For two thirds of the journey from the coastline to the central Sahara there is no road or marked track. Huge trucks shuttle between Benghazi and Kufra but at heavy cost and with heavily reduced working life over the desert route. Refrigerated trucks could travel along a road if there were one : construction costs would be prohibitive. Air freight is the alternative, but equally costly though the scheme's advocates argue that Libya flies imported meat from Bulgaria, so why not from Kufra? The decisive factor will be the flow and cost of expertise and labour. Libyan graduates look to executive posts and professional life in the towns and are not coming forward to live in desert trailers with leave to the coast only once or twice a month. Like the oil industry, Kufra will be a slice of technology inserted into a backward economy and, like oil, run by foreigners. Those who make policy believe that cost is no object and that the country must break dependence on food imports at all costs. But this dependence is being exchanged for a new dependence, on the West's advanced technology. In the Libyan desert oil is being traded for agriculture on a scale that only oil revenues could afford. It is a combination of the extravagant spending momentum of the oil economy together with the army cult of management and technology.

Since Kufra became a priority of the development plan a second and similar scheme but twice as large again has been projected for the Assasir area 200 miles north of Kufra; a hydrological study is now in progress. Under the latest plan almost 3000 farms are being developed for allocation to farmers. Farmers are eligible for longterm loans and subsidies. The Agricultural Bank purchases surplus products - like groundnuts during 1972 - to stop the price falling. There are ambitious plans for afforestation and pasturage improvement. Milking cows have been imported from Denmark and Danish experts with them to begin a cow-breeding programme; two dairy plants to process milk products are to be established. Two new agricultural colleges are being opened one in Sebbha and the other near Barce, and students have been sent for training to Egypt. Meanwhile there are plans for thousands of kilometres of agricultural roads to link agricultural regions with marketing centres. 'All this,' the ministry says 'is bound to result

in increasing production and income of farmers, and the creation of new incentives to farmers to remain on their lands, which is one of the main objectives of the development plan.'

Libya has virtually no industry. By the time the Gadafi regime came to power there was a tobacco factory in Tripoli employing 500 workers; two small textile factories in Benghazi; a gypsum factory in Tripoli of barely more than 50 workers; small plants for the processing of macaroni, olive oil and fizzy drinks, detergents (on foreign patents) and tomato canning. There was one cement factory : the construction industry like the rest of the economy, relies on imports, in this instance of bricks and cement, even gravel; the result was that a sack of cement grew perhaps four times in price on its journey from coastline to interior.

The new government's industrial policy was outlined in a decree of April 1970. Largescale and medium industry especially in the fields of oil, gas, agricultural processing and construction materials is to be reserved to the public sector. A state run Industrial Corporation is in charge of the public sector projects. Under the 3 Year Plan eighteen new factories are under construction. These projects are considered beyond the capacity of the private sector to finance and in any case their timing is crucial to the progression of development plan. (Ministry officials complain that it took four years for private capital to establish a cement factory although government had provided 80 per cent of the finance.) The private sector is expected to concentrate on small industry, possibly some medium-size and on retail trade. Foreign minority participation is permitted in industry which needs or uses the latest technology or produces for the export market.

Lest the reservation of a sector of the economy is not considered inducement enough by private investors, large sums have been allocated to the Industrial and Real Estate Bank for interest-free loans. The private sector is also offered generous tax exemptions, protective tariffs and exemption from duty in the import of machinery and raw materials. But in a year (1969-70) in which government allocated £3½ million in the form of

majority shareholder in all the banks.

In 1970 insurance companies were placed under government supervision and control. The Libyan National Insurance Company which was completely Libyan-owned had to cede 60 per cent of its holding to government. Branches of foreign insurance companies were given a year to liquidate their operations and to convert, like the Libyan companies, into jointstock companies with majority Libyan and part government holdings.

In the same year government nationalised - without compensation - all petroleum distribution facilities within the country. There was also the BP nationalisation, undertaken as a political reprisal for the British government's role in the Gulf.

Major infrastructural projects of the Development Plan are supervised by the public sector but have been contracted to foreign firms. Kufra's well-drilling is being carried out by a Libyan contracting firm, the only one of its size, but the consultancy firm supervising the drilling and carrying out further technical studies for the expansion of the project is American. The contract for the supply of turbine pumps and petroleum engines was won by a Libyan-Syrian company. The hydrological survey in the Assarir area to the north of Kufra is in the hands of a British company. In the Ghadaes area the search for water is being conducted by a French part-government consortium. Egypt's state land reclamation authority is in charge of a government model farm project in the Hefara Plain and an Egyptian company is searching for underground water in Fezzan. Tripoli's £20 million harbour extensions have gone to a Turkish contractor; the Zawia oil refinery to an Italian firm. West German interests are involved in desalination and electrification projects; Yugoslav contractors are building dams. It's a recognisable international division of labour, with Libyan oil paying the bills and international firms reaping the profits.

By 1972 Libya had an estimated labour force of just over half a million.

	In '000s
Total labour force	557.0
Libyan	477.0
Foreign labour	80.0

Employment by sector:	Total	Libyan	Non-Libyan
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	163.5	154.8	8.7
Petroleum and gas production	11.5	7.8	3.7
Other mining & quarrying	6.9	6.0	0.9
Manufacturing	38.8	30.2	8.6
Electricity and Water	7.3	6.6	0.7
Construction	60.5	29.6	30.9
Trade, restaurants & hotels	38.3	35.8	2.5
Transport, storage & communications	51.9	50.3	1.6
Financing, insurance & business serv.	5.7	4.9	0.8
Public administration	88.7	85.8	2.9
Educational services	40.5	33.1	7.4
Health services	21.3	17.1	4.2
Other services	22.1	15.0	7.1

Though this shows that for every six Libyans in the labour force there is one non-Libyan, the figure for foreign labour is considered to be a strong under-estimation.

It has proved impossible to get figures of Egyptian labour in Libya despite - or perhaps because of - the imminence of the unified state. A Labour Ministry estimate of Tunisian labour, mostly agricultural, was put at 40,000 during 1973, but this is probably an over-estimate.

116

It is estimated that of the total number in employment, 62 per cent are wage or salaried employees and the rest farmers, proprietors, tradesmen, craftsmen and family workers.

There have been two recent (1972) census of government employ. One provided a total of 104,000 and the second, conducted by the Civil Service Department's Control Bureau and probably the more accurate, estimated 134,560. But because neither the army nor the police force are included the total of those on the government payroll is far higher. The break-down of government employment into professional, technical, semi-skilled and unskilled labour is revealing for the dependence of the administration on highest grade foreign skills:

8. RELIGION AS POLITICS

The proclamation of the Libyan Republic on 1 September 1969 was passionate:

> 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, O great Libyan people: To execute your free will, to realise your precious aspirations, truly to answer your repeated call demanding change and purification, urging work and initiative, and eager for revolution and assault, your armed forces have destroyed the reactionery, backward, and decadent regime whose putrid odour assailed one's nose and the vision of whose attributes made one's eyes tremble. With one blow from your heroic army, the idols collapsed and the graven images shattered. In one terrible moment of fate, the darkness of ages - from the rule of the Turks to the tyranny of the Italians and the era of reaction, bribery, intercession, favouritism, treason and treachery - was dispersed. Thus, from now on, Libya is deemed a free, sovereign republic under the name of the Libyan Arab Republic - ascending with God's help to exalted heights, proceeding in the path of freedom, unity and social justice, guaranteeing the right of equlity to its citizens, and opening before them the doors of honourable work - with none terrorised, none cheated, none oppressed, no master and no servant, but free brothers in the shadow of a society over which flutters, God willing, the banner of prosperity and equality, Extend your hands, open your hearts, forget your rancours, and stand together against the enemy of the Arab nation, the enemy of Islam, the enemy of humanity, who burned our holy places and shattered our honour. Thus will we build glory, revive our heritage, and revenge an honour wounded and a right usurped. O you who witnessed the holy war of Omar al-Mukhtar for Libya, Arabism and Islam, O you who fought the good fight with Ahmad al-Sharif, O sons of the steppe, O sons of the desert, O sons of the ancient cities, O sons of the upright countryside, O sons of the villages - our beloved and beautiful villages - the hour of work has come. Forward.' (1)

Between those in power and the populace at large the radio was the sole link, but behind the scenes the R.C.C. meeting in continuous session, was casting about for civilian intermediaries. A small circle of Benghazi students whom Gadafi knew and trusted was asked to recommend civilians for appointment to a new government, but the contacts were casual, almost haphazard. Five days after the take-over, a group of Benghazi intellectuals who had been in opposition to the monarchy addressed a nine page memorandum to the R.C.C. It welcomed the revolution, for the Libyan people had been eager for change, but a real revolution had to more than merely arise from the aspirations of the masses; it had to give them the means to express their support through the organisation of trade unions, women, students, intellectuals. In other words, they said, a revolution had to be build not from the top but at the base. Any other politics would degenerate into intrigue. The Benghazi group received no reply but heard informally that the R.C.C. had rejected its representations as coming from a political party. In November the memorandum was presented once again, together with a request for an appointment with Golonel Gadafi. The request was never granted.(2)

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On the eighth day after the coup, a Council of Ministers was announced, of two army men holding the portfolios of defence and the interior, and seven civilians, under the premiership of Dr. Mahmoud Suleiman Maghrabi who had been serving a term of imprisonment for his leading part in the strike of dock workers during the Six Day War. Apart from Maghrabi, Salah Boweisir and Anis Ahmad Shitawy who became ministers of foreign affairs and petroleum respectively, the other appointments were of relatively obscure personalities.(3) From the outset the R.C.C. functioned as a closed system of authority with supreme power.(4) Its members worked round the clock, generally in the Azzizia Barracks where Gadafi took up residence and which the R.C.C. made its working headquarters. If the twelve young men consulted at all, it was to seek confirmation of their acts among their friends the Free Officers. There was the minimum of contact between the R.C.C. and the Council of Ministers; the former was busy reorganising the army,(5) finding its Arab and foreign feet and exploring the path of its revolution. No systematic programme of the revolution was ever announced. Cabinet Ministers - and newspaper editorial writers - had to gauge its aims and means by the public utterances of Gadafi. The isolation of the Cabinet from the R.C.C. and the lack of confidence on the part of the Ministers led to a confusion of policy and direction. Adminstration slowed down to a crawl, in some cases to a halt. Apart from the leading politicians, the majority of the senior civil servants who had run the previous regime were in prison or under house arrest. The constant references to corruption made civil servants edgy. Rather than face accusations or make mistakes, they evaded responsibility and surrendered initiative. Every departmental matter, however trivial, came to rest on the desk of the Minister, But in the end the only men who were confident enough to act sat on the R.C.C., which was not only all-powerful but inaccessible. Twice in three months the civilian ministers asked the R.C.C. for permission to resign. Their differences were not so much over policy or principle as over their place within the R.C.C. system of government.

In the reshuffle at the beginning of 1970 five R.C.C. members including Gadafi joined eight civilians; eight months later the composition of the Council of Ministers was changed once again, to reverse the proportion of soldiers and civilians. There were four Councils of Ministers in two years(6) but whatever the proportion of soldiers and civilians, and however the mixture was shaken, the problem remained the reluctance of the R.C.C. to delegate power. From its outset the Libyan army revolution was firm in following the Nasserite precept of the hegemony of the military. Gadafi gave an interview to Figaro:(9)

> 'Why is the R.C.C. confined to the military only; will this not lead to an indictment of the army for dominating the government?'
>
> 'Frankly speaking, 'Gadafi replied, 'the officers have the conscience to recognise the people's claims better than others. This depends on our origin which is characterised by humbleness. We are not rich people; the parents of the majority of us are living in huts. My parents are still living in a tent near Sirte. The interests we represent are genuinely those of the Libyan people.'

In other words, army officers of humble origin equal the people of humble origin; the one can interpret the needs and will of the other; the one is the other.

The regime spent its early period in office trying to compensate for the deficiencies of an independence which had done so little to erase from Libyans the sense of contempt they felt at the hands of Italians and other foreigners. Vestiges of colonialism had to be eliminated, like the expulsion of the Italian community;(8) the conversion of foreign banks into Libyan joint stock companies; the evacuation of the bases. Symbols of conversion were important so all place and street names in Latin script had to make way for Arabic; cathedrals and churches were closed; foreign privileges cancelled and foreigners harrassed by petty control regulations; and a ban placed on alcohol as a return to Islamic tenets of living. Royal projects were suspended including the making of a new throne for the King, but more importantly, restrictions were placed upon the operation of the zawiyas and Sanusi religious education. The minimum wage was doubled; rentals reduced; contract labour stopped. Ministers were prohibited from carrying on private commercial enterprises or leasing state property, or borrowing government funds without approval.(9) This was part of the drive against corruption.

Within the first year People's Courts(10) were at work. First the King, members of the Royal Diwan and former premiers went on trial;(11) then a large group accused of election rigging; and finally journalists and editors charged with corrupting public opinion. The trials were televised at peak viewing times and the television station was beseiged with requests for repeat showings. The judgments tended to be based less on any careful weighting of evidence and argument than on the political stance and position of the accused; some who expressed remorse got lighter sentences. It was not on the whole a vengeful regime but the court findings were to legitimise what the soldiers' coup had already achieved. Oil companies were untouched and it was uncertain whether the government would look into the way that they had gained and worked their concessions. Ten newspapers had their licences suspended, and soon little remained of the Libyan press. In time even official organs like Al-Thawra the official mouthpiece of the Revolution, was shut down for unstated errors, and remaining publications came under the tight government supervision.

People's power was the recurring theme of Gadafi's frequent public speeches:

> 'The men of the revolution will not remain in their offices. They will go to the people...to investigate their problems. The age of dealing with the probelms which disturb the classes of the toiling masses by means of counterfeit promises from air-conditioned offices has now irrevocably ended'.

Premier Maghrabi told a press conference that it was unlikely that party organisation would assume any importance. The revolution stood for what benefitted the people; 'as for subtle intellectual matters, we will study them later'. Gadafi said government hostility to 'groups supporting specific parties' was unlikely but it was hoped that these people would adhere to the revolution. It was intended to set up a popular organisation 'to bring the working forces of the people together', and it would be formed by the R.C.C. and the 'popular vanguards' which were 'conscious active groups faithful to the principles of the revolution.' A few weeks later Gadafi explicitly excluded 'party' politics:

> 'He who engages in party activities after today commits treason... The revolution will pay no attention to the past on this subject. It will not call to account those who sought the road to deliverance by way of party activities... But henceforth he who engages in party activities commits treason'.(12)

This became one of the slogans displayed on banners for public occasions. Those who formed the core of opposition under the monarchy, who had been imprisoned for acts of opposition and also for adherence to the tenets of Arab nationalism and socialism now advocated by the young soldiers, were rejected. Gadafi went further. He announced that 'labourers and the revolution' are an individable entity, so there would be no labour unions which could take advantage of their position 'for their own ends;' and while there might be certain labour organisations, they would be for 'ordinary administrative duties'. He added: 'We do not accept intermediaries between the revolution and its working forces'.(13) Old trade unionists like Rajab Neihum, the founder of Arab nationalism in the Libyan trade union movement, was ignored. When new unions were organised from scratch this was done under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour. Within the first half year the R.C.C. scuttled what chance it might have had of enrolling into the revolution the tiny force of radicals, admittedly most of them intellectuals, that the country had produced.

9 Gadafi also produced a formula for united politics in the Arab world, which was one of the preconditions for Pan-Arabism. The occasion was the first press conference he gave, in February 1970. His theme was the failure of Arab unity in the past. This was due to the great number or organisations in the Arab homeland which had hindered the unity of the Palestinian fedayin and had made Arab states victim to conflicts among themselves instead of achieving unity:

> 'The Arab Socialist Union does not meet with the Baath Party and both organisations do not meet with the Algerian Liberation Front... The objectives of the Baath Party are unity, freedom and socialism, and those of the A.S.U. are freedom, socialism and unity, and those of the Arab National Movement are liberation, unity and social justice. Thus the slogans are the same but we differ in their arrangement and enter into a Ryzantine philosophy and a sterile ideological dispute as a result of the great number of political and ideological organisations. If we set up a new organisation (he had been asked about the form of politics to be permitted in Libya) we shall add another problem and another obstacle on the path of convergence... Discussion is going on to reach a unified formula and one Arab movement... At a meeting with the Syrians, Egyptians, Algerians and Iraquis we considered this question and all agreed that the delay in unity was caused by the many political and ideological organisations, and a settlement of this great problem should be reached.'

This ideological regionalism, in Gadafi's view, was similar to the religious sects whose appearance had led to the collapse of the Islamic state after Mohamed.

In May 1970 the R.C.C. organised a series of public discussions known as the Revolutionary Intellectuals Seminar.(14) It was concerned with 'a definition of the working forces of the people who have an interest in the Revolution'; the popular organisation and its basis, Arab unity, the problem of democracy and revolutionary transformation; and the responsibilities of the government during the stage of the social revolution. The participants were hand picked and included the R.C.C. members, some Free Officers, the Mufti, the Rector of the Islamic University and those described as 'Libyan Intellectuals' though not students. There was a handful of women. The proceedings were relayed by television. This was to be the forerunner of a series of public consultations convened ostensibly to involve the masses or their spokesmen in policy-making but whose scope was obstructed by the limits of Gadafi's own thinking.

As the proceedings opened a participant asked that the slogans of the revolution (freedom, socialism and unity) be included on the agenda for discussion. Gadafi rejected the suggestion out of hand. The slogans were taken for granted because the Revolution was staged to achieve them. The central debate was an attempt to define the forces for or against the revolution, and what constituted the 'crushed' or 'mashed' classes (mashruta - power) of Libyan society: Since this was one of the rare occasions when Gadafi allowed ordinary people to speak in public the extracts below will give something of the flavour of the debate:

> 'MR. 'ABD AL-MUN'IM AL-MUNIR MUHAMMED/ Before we define the working forces I think it would be appropriate to know which revolution we are talking about...if it was the Libyan Revolution...we should in this case put some light on the Revolution itself...whether it was a socialistic revolution or...(Before he ends his talk the Moderator interrupted him and said 'the aim of the Revolution are clear and are not for discussion or questioning'.

COL. GADAFI/ Pardon me...We are talking about the Revolution that took place in Libya...and to be more specific the September 1 Revoluttion..' (Laughter)

MR. 'ABD AL-MUN'IM/ There are two kinds of revolution: the revolution of the Middle Class; the socialistic revolutions. The September 1 Revolution is a transitory event which will eventually turn into a socialistic revolution...

MODERATOR/ Please come to the point...and if you cannot speak your mind...please give others the chance to speak.

MR. 'ABD AL-MUN'IM/ Well...I believe that those who have an interest in the Revolution are: Labourers, Farmers, Revolutionary Middle Class People, Intellectuals and Soldiers.

MR. ABU ZAYD/ In order to define the working forces we should know who are the enemies of the people... If we could do that, then we would reach the point where we would be able to define the working forces.

MR. RASHID KATAYT/ He attributes the problem from which the Arabs are suffering to the writers and the originators of imported theories.

MR. JUM'A AL FEZZANI/ The upper middle class is the counter-category to the Revolution. Because this category is tied up with the concerns of imperialism...(He continued that there are two classes of people: 1. The exploiters and, 2. the exploited class of people. Toilers are the only class of people which form the real Revolutionary working force.

COL. GADAFI/ (Asked the speaker Jum'a al-Fezzani to talk about the lower middle class of people since he talked about the upper class of people and also to define the category of toilers and to be specific in his interpretation of the roles of those categories.)

MR. FEZZANI/ The lower middle class of people are those whose monthly earnings do not exceed 100 pounds. Students, teachers and government employees are considered from the lower middle class.

COL. GADAFI/ (Talking to Mr. Fezzani) You said that the lower middle class of people are the teachers, students...(Before GADAFI ends his questions MR. FEZZANI said) The Army officers are also from the lower middle class. (Laughter) COL GADAFI/ Do you consider the students who lives in a shack to be from the lower middle class?

MR. FEZZANI/ Well...If he believes in the toilers' theory he will be considered a revolutionary element, but if he does not believe in that... he may still be considered from the revolutionary forces but should not assume a ruling position.

MAJOR JALLOUD/ (Talking to the speaker) Let's say that we improved the living standard of those toilers you talked about and they come to enjoy a good life and are not related to the category of toilers...In which category of people will you than attach them? (Laughter)

MR. FEZZANI/ Mao Tse-Tun, Castro and Ben Bella are from the lower middle class...and they are still from the middle class because they adopted the toilers' principles.

COL. GADAFI/ (Asked the speaker how much money he makes per month)

MR. FEZZANI/ I make 117 pounds per month.

COL. GADAFI/ (Said with laughing) Oh...you must be from the upper middle class. (Laughter. Gadafi continued) I make 192 pounds and 6½ piasters per month...this figure, of course, makes me one of the upper middle class.

MUHAMED MUSTAFA AL-MAGHRISI/ There should be no distinction between classes of people.

HUSAYN BASHIER 'UMRANI/ Some of the speakers were of the opinion that we have no working forces... But I say yes, we have working forces, for example, the port workers, the workers of the electricity company, the municipality workers, the tobacco workers, etc... The intellectuals do not live with the workers or feel their problems... The labour force is made up of those who carry the burdens which can't be carried by the employers or the intellectuals. (Applause)

MAHMUD ALI' AL-SWALI/ It is not possible to define the working forces of the people... We have farmers who own 100 sheep and they get about 500 kg. of barley from the government in addition to £200 a month given them by the government...and it is not possible to include them in the category of toilers... Also the monthly earnings of any government employee is known...but the amazing thing about them is that in four or five years of service they become owners of villas and stores...do we consider them from the category of toilers?

MODERATOR/ You are asked to define the working forces of the people that have an interest in the Revolution and not to talk about social corruption.

MUHAMMAD MABURK SHRAFA/ I thank God because I am not from those who claim to be intellectuals. The Revolution was staged for the people... Therefore the whole people have an interest in the Revolution, and categories of people should not be segregated one from another, considering the fact that our socialism is a democratic one.

Whatever analytical trends were struggling to emerge were obliterated in Gadafi's summing up, which he presented as follows:

1. The proportion of those who were of the opinion that the whole people have an interest in the revolution was 8.

2. The proportion of those who were of the opinion that they are labourers, farmers, revolutionary intellectuals, the non-exploitative national capatalists and the Army people was 11.

3. The proportion of those who were of the opinion that they are faithful people, productive people and those who support the Revolution was 9½.

4. The proportion of those who were of the opinion that the people is divided into two categories represented in labourers and farmers was 2.

5. The proportion of those who were of the opinion that the working forces of the people should be defined in the light of the circumstances of the community and the new social relations was 2.

Segregated categories were:

1. Capatalists
2. Idle Rich
3. Exploiters
4. Those who cooperate with foreigners
5. Currupt people
6. The shepherds who consider the people as a herd of animals
7. Selfish people
8. Rumourmongers
9. Lazy people

When the gathering discussed Arab unity and the shape of popular organisation Gadafi encountered views in sharp conflict with his own. The great majority of speakers were of the view that the popular organisation should be developed from the base to the summit of election:

> (GADAFI/ Do you mean that the representatives of the opopular organisations should be elected by the people? Do you think that the people have reached a degree of consciousness where they could have free lelections? Have you thought of the old days where votes were bought at the rice and cous-cous-parties?)

In the ensuing months R.C.C. decrees dissolved women's associations and the lawyers' union.(15) Since the existing trade unions were said to be defunct, a new labour law(16) promulgated minimum work conditions and wage-fixing procedures and directed the Ministry of Labour to establish and supervise new unions. Union officials were named by decree on the recommendation of the Ministry after consultation with the workers and, later, elections were closely supervised. A workers education centre was established to teach principles of trade unionism. It was a curious system of firm ministry guidance laid down by law but in part mitigated by the awareness of leading ministry officials that official protection and control were no substitute for indpendent workers' organisations. The unions were prohibited from affiliating to any 'foreign' trade union federation. Government employees other than labourers were not covered by the trade union law.

By the time that the newspapers were instructed to initiate a public debate on the shape of popular organisation, the R.C.C. had made up its mind. The model was to be the Arab Socialist Union. This was the only authentic political form of the Arab revolution.(17) It took a national from but was based on (pan-national' experience. It abolished differences between classes peacefully and avoided the tragedy of class struggle. It did not depend upon secrecy and underground cells. It enabled the application of socialism and so guaranteed that no capitalist government or society would appear. Transplanting the Egyptian model, the A.S.U. Charter defined the forces of the revolution as peasants, labourers, soldiers, intellectuals and national capitalists and stipulated that at all levels of the union, fifty per cent of the members should be peasants and labourers. The national or non-exploiting capitalist was defined as onewho did not exploit others, who earned his money by lawful means, who could use his capital efficiently, and who was subject to progressive taxation.(18) Membership was open to all Libyans over eighteen unless disqualified by order of the R.C.C. There was a fairly conventional organisational pyramid, from basic unit to national congress, with the addition that army and police organisations were to be formed and run under the R.C.C., and that the R.C.C. had perched itself on tope of the pyramid as 'leading supreme authority of the A.S.U.'.(19) The initial committees were hand picked by the R.C.C. and instructed to organise the first elections, during which, in the absence of the

right to campaign on policy and ideological issues, it was not surprising that voters and candidates resorted, as in the past, to family and factional politics instead.

On the face of it the A.S.U. founding conferences[20] placed no restraints on political expression but once again it was most revealing as a gauge of Gadafi's thinking and his style of demagogic politics and ruthless control of the base. At times the conference was a debate among equals; at other times Godafi played schoolmaster to a class of recalcitrant pupils. So defined socialism as social justice:

> 'We want to progress and rid the people of poverty, hunger, backwardness, and ignorance. We call this socialism. A phiosophical discussion on what constitutes socialism, communism, capitalism, society and cooperative society can be carried on by philosophers and thinkers. They can write books on the subject explaining the various doctrines. The ordinary people like us must search for progress and that is all... We want to attain progress in the manner that suits us. Communism suits some, while capitalism or socialism suits others. Theoretically speaking, socialism means here that nobody should have a lot of capital and be very rich and able to exploit the people. Socialism does not mean the final elimination of class differences. Such differences are essential to society. That is the law of life... Briefly, socialism means social justice. It is the middle road. It is the way to close gaps between the classes.'

Some delegates contradicted him boldly:

> SPEAKER/ True we need hospitals, schools and a very quick revolutionery and social transformation. However we must learn how to build a sound edifice... How can we build a pyramid at the top when the foundation is unsound? One day the pyramid will collapse.
>
> GADAFI/ This is not the heart of the matter.
>
> SPEAKER/ The duty of the revolution is to build freedon and democracy; that is the duty now.
>
> GADAFI/ You are mistaken... Suppose we want to make a decision affecting the workers. We want to consult the workers. The workers are influenced by their own interests. They would produce decisions that are unfair for the other sections of the people's working forces. The larger the number of people consulted, the more it is done at the expense of revolutionary transformation.
>
> SPEAKER/ The Prophet consulted his companions.
>
> ANOTHER SPEAKER/ I say democracy is not a problem because it is non-existent in Islam. When the mission of Islam began on earth, Almighty God spoke thus to Mohamed: 'Consult them about the matter. When determined rely on God.'

Godafi laid down the law on the role of trade unions and their relation to the A.S.U.;

> 'Today's topic is the A.S.U.'s relationship with the trade unions - all unions and not just workers' unions. We must determine the relationship of all trade unions and federations within the framework of the A.S.U. We fixed this day for discussion of this topic but so far no one has given pertinent points on the daily relationship between the A.S.U. and the trade unions. If you have the answer to this question, fine. This answer should be given to the Congress secretariat, which in turn will hand it to a special committee to discuss your views. If the purpose is merely to speak over the microphone, we can bring 500 microphones so you can speak loud and clear. We are not entertainers, but representatives of the people.

> Our aim is to seek justice, not to speak over microphones. As I have already said, whoever has an answer, an opinion, or a solution to the problem should write it down briefly and present it to the secretariat.
>
> Finally, the A.S.U. is political work, a popular political organisation. The trade unions have nothing to do with politics - at no time and at no place. Trade unions and federations are professional organisations. It is A.S.U. members who engage in politics. It must be clear that trade unions and federations are professional organisations which tackle the problems of their members. Politics must be confined to the A.S.U. It is impermissible to conduct politics outside the A.S.U. in any union or profession. Otherwise, trade unions and federations would turn into political parties. Consequently, there would not be a single organisation for the people's working forces. There would be a group of political parties in the country.'

The A.S.U. was born dead. Shortly after its formation Gadafi made a speech at Sabrata of more than characteristic viquor and frankness. He disclosed that he had left the command for three weeks because the recolution ahd failed to make strides. (This was not his first attempt to resignation. Once before he had been persuaded by emotional crowds to continue as leader.) He wished to remain in the service of the revolution but as soldier not leader. The revolution was failing because 'pecuniary lust is rooted in the hearts of officials'. The Free Officers, he said, had been living on their nerves for ten years doing secret work inside the armed forces. After the Revolution they had lost the right of private freedom. 'Nobody among us can go to a shop, sit in a coffee-shop, mix with the people... The ruling seats in the revolutionay era are not chairs but fire and embers.' He had resigned because his concept of the revolution differed from the revolution in its practice. The people were sunk in passivity. It was exactly what his radical critics were saying. The difference was that they saw the R.C.C. and its view of politics as the cause for bureaucratic sluggishness and popular alienation and apathy. The structure and rules of the A.S.U. made it less a popular political movement than a parallel administration, an adjuct to the machinery already run by the R.C.C. and the ministries on the local government level. The rigid direction of the R.C.C. had already suffocated all initiative in the civil service; the same fate awaited the A.S.U. And if despite all odds A.S.U. groups managed to develop a dynamism or a policy contrary to the R.C.C. conception it would without doubt face dissolution. How could they in any case, be participatory politics wuch tight control from the top? This was to be the source of endemic strain between Gadafi and groups of urban and politically-minded Libyans.

During the A.S.U. conference he had delivered a fierce attack on the Libyan intellectuals educated before the Revolution. Some had gone to Russia: 'Their case must be dealt with' he said. 'They either convince us or we convince them; they either imprison us or we imprison them...' Others had studied in Arab countries, some in Damascus, others in Iraq, and still others in Lebanon.

> 'At that time, the Ba'th Party, a nationalist party, wanted to unite the Arab world. Young Ba'thists used to say: Your country is reactionary and ruled by the Americans, the British and the monarchy. Our party must operate in your country because some libyans are Ba'thists. I knew the Ba'thists by name.
>
> 'The peasants and workers, members of this congress, do not know anything about Ba'thists, Arab nationists, communitts or others. Only the intellectuals know them; those who have studies in the United States, Britain, France or elsewhere. Their culture became Western. Because they studied the capitalist economy, they defend Western liberalism and other ideas... We want to establish a group of educated people to be the backbone of the A.S.U. But this backbone must be purely Arab which has faith in and is loyal to the legacy of the Libyan Arab and the Arab nation. It must also be sincere in expressing the nation's requirements for its independent future and in preserving its character and nationalism. We shall not allow suspect elements with a black record to meslead the Libyan masses and to kick the A.S.U. sometimes to the Right and sometimes to the left.

The Moslem Brotherhood was not acceptable either [1] since it fuctioned conspiratorially.

The A.S.U. conference was barely concluded when the R.C.C. decreed a law (21) making the A.S.U. the only legal political organisation in the country and declaring that all party political activities were treasonable. Anyone who advocated or established a political group, whether secretly or publicly, would be subject to the death penalty. Anyone who had knowledge of such grouping and failed to report it was subject to imprisonment for not less than ten years. The R.C.C. would convene special courts to try offenders.

There was the fear that others would steal the army-made revolution: and the fear of radicalism. There was also the hangover of the frustration engendered by the factional disputes of Middle East politics; and the army's traditional anti-intellectualism and its contempt for civilians. The effect of this running fire directed at political groups and ideology frightened even non-party adherents into withdrawal from public activety. The government's official organ Al-Thawra was shut down by Gadafi in a fit of impetuosity: it was badly written, its editorials were unsound, why did the intellectuals not write for it, [2] he railed. [3] But anyone not in direct or indirect government service had been intimidated into silence. Students who had started as enthusiastis for the revolution were disconcerted by Gadafi's stress on the religious content of the revolution. At the beginning of 1972 the R.C.C. staged a confrontation with the organisation by refusing to admit certain duly elected delegates to the impending student conference and to permit any autonomous student organisation. The students struck in protest. The dispute was conciliated but the anti-strike measure that followed affected students equally with workers in the public sector. Side by side the R.C.C. encouraged a rival officially-inspired Nasserist student organisation.

After the A.S.U. conference the civilian ministers tendered their resignations. It took some months for a new cabinet to be formed and some of its members were appointed without their prior agreement. Gadafi tried to turn this

reluctance to enter government into a virtue. It distinguished them from the ministers of the defunct regime who had hung on to office at all costs. He revealed that every one of his ministers had submitted his resignation 'many times'. He read a letter from the ministers suggesting the next crop be appointed from the ranks of elected organisations, presumably the A.S.U., seeing this was the only legal political body. It was a case of ministers still carrying responsibility without power. They had seen the politicians of the previous regime on trial for actions and policies of a regime that they had been unable significantly to influence? Who could tell how permanent a regime was and how close the day that they too, might be called to account?

It was true that there had always been a political vacuum in Libyan politics due in part to manarchial control but principally to the economic feebleness of the middle class which constitutes the base of politics of other Middle East states. Oil had been ushering in a new middle class. But the Revolution interrupted the process and then froze the independenct activities of this class so that the army might control soddal development. To those who pressed for democratic structures, for constitutional forms of participation rather than Gadafi's style of guided democracy by public session, and for a political programme representing the needs of the people, Gadafi's riposte was 'You are imagining the people. You talk about the people, but what do you know? We are the people. The Free Officers, the sons of poor families, were the embodiment of the people. Power that accrued to them meant power to the people'. It was the Nasserite form of populism as an ideology, as a political movement, and as a ligitimation of the power of the R.C.C.

But Gadafi went further than Nasser, the grand exempler of staff-initiated politics, in seeing politics as true religion controlled by the religious state:

> 'You are a true Moslem, Mr. President. What is the role played by religion in your private life? What is the relation between your religious consciousness and the political decisions you have made? There is no contradicition between religion consciousness and political decisions'. (23)

Gadafi's view of religion as politics meant that setbacks to the Arab cause were attributable to human corruptability, to a failure of true belief, to a departure from the moral principles of Islam. This approach reduces social and political action to the level of spiritual commitment, and the pursuit of policy to a highly individual crusade. While few if any of the army officers around Gadafi shared his religious zeal, their notion of politics was likewise religious rather than secular. In Gadafi's view there was only one source of truth. 'Here', he told the Le Monde correspondent:

> 'read the Koran or re-read it. You'll find the answers to all your questions. Arab unity, socialism, inheritance rights, the place of women in society, the inevitable fall of the Roman Empire, the destruction of our planet following the intervention of the atom bomb. It's all there for anyone willing to read it.'(24)

Politics was reduced to revelation and fatalism; and the statesmanship to canny reading and memorising of the texts. Since the Islamic ethos is essentially universalistic and egalitarian, preaching the quality of all believers regardless of differences in wealth or occupation, it deliberately ignores the economic structure and minimises its social significance, inhibiting the emergence of a politcs as class defined. This, of course, coincides unerringly with the middle ideaology of the petit-bourgeoisie which characterises the army regimes of the Middle East, and whoe growth is so stimulated by the expansion of the state machine and the state-directed economy.

The Gadafi style of religious philosophical debate was next institutionalised on the Supreme Council for National Guidance, which, together with the principal planning body, fell directly under the R.C.C. and under Gadafi's chairmanship. On this body mufti from many corners of the Arab world joined Libyans, hand picked as usual, in a search for a philosophy of the revolution and a universal theory. It was on this body that shar'ia law, its interpretation according to the Koran, and its applicability to the modern world were debated. Following these debates, the R.C.C. promulgated a group of Islamic laws, including one for the punishment of thieves and armed robbers(25) by the amputation of hand and foot. The law contained a battery of qualifying and exceptional clauses which made its general application unlikely but it observed the principle that the letter of the Koran is as relevant today as it was in the seventh century though amputation, according to article 21, was to take place by medical methods including anaesthesia. There had been debate, even mild dissension, but solely within the context of state and religion being interchangeable and the Koran as the basis of law, which meant that all was reduced to religious wemantics. Did cutting off the hand of the thief in fact mean 'interrupting' the hand, as some argued, by removing temptation, social pressure and conversion, or did it mean amputation? Judges, mufti, newspaper columnists and linguistic experts debated the issue on television. The most literal interpretation prevailed.

Soon Gadafi was ready to launch his Third Theory. It steered an alternate, middle course between capitalism and communism, but had essentially to be based upon religion. He propounded it not only for Libyans but for the Arab world and indeed the world as a whole.(26) The failures of the 'isms' of both east and west had given rise to the need for a new outlook. This was based on

religion and nationalism since these are the paramount drives that have moved history. (Marx's economic interpretation of history, he said, had been caused by the conditions of poverty in which he and his children lived in London 'where his food was given to him by his friend Engels'). Without religion, people and states had no moral obligation. Islam was the ideal religion but all who believed in God could share the Moslem belief, and distinctions between those who believed in the Prophet Mohamed or Jesus or any other apostle should be abandoned. Gadafi invested a great deal in the exposition of the third theory that he placed before an international youth conference in Tripoli during 1973. Apart from some small delegations from African states beholden to the Libyan regime for aid, its only apparent converts were in the delegation of French Gaullist youth who equated it with de Gaulle's theory of a third force but who were howled down by delegations from Guinea and Dahomey when they tried to present de Gaulle as the liberator of Africa. For the rest, delegations including those from Arab countries dismissed the theory, in private anyway, with derision as the musings of a petty religious philosopher.

By the time that Third Theory had become the official philosophy, the popular or cultural revolution had been launched. This came as unpredictably as most of the R.C.C.'s major policy initiatives, at a public meeting in Zuara to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohamed.(27) The revolution was in peril, Gadafi said. Libyan commandos sent to take part in the struggle for Palestine had been held back not by Israeli but by Arab soldiers. The front line states had given up the battle, but Libya would not. In spite of repeated appeals to Libyan youth they had not enlisted in the army. Ideal agricultural and resettlement schemes had been set up, but Libyans were refusing to work in remote parts of the country. University 'perverts' were engaging in subversive activities. 'I personally cannot allow any more of this irresponsible behaviour'. He suggested a five point programme:

1. All existing laws must be repealed and replaced by revolutionary enactments designed to produce the necessary revolutionary change.

2. The weeding out of all feeble minds from society by taking appropriate measures towards perverts and deviationists.

3. The staging of an administrative revolution so as to get rid of all forms of bourgeoisie and bureaucracy.

4. The setting up of popular committees whereby the people might proceed to seize power. This was meant to ensure freedom for the people as against bureaucrats and opportunists.

5. The staging of a cultural revolution so as to get rid of all imported poisonous ideas and fuse the people's genuine moral and material potentialities.

Within days of the speech two overlaying waves of arrest took place. In some instances individuals were denounced by Popular Committees, but the majority of the arrests were carried out by the secret police. University lecturers, lawyers and writers, employees of government ministries including

the attorney-general's office and the Tripoli Chamber of Commerce, younger members of prominent coastal families - most of them, seemingly, individuals identified in the past with Marxist, Baathist, Moslem Brotherhood or other such political circles were seized. There had never been any suggestion that 'factional' organisation existed; the persecution was aimed at those who had not succeeded in identifying with the regime's system of state-run politics. The cultural revolution was against people who 'propagate poisonous ideas' alien to the Islamic origins of the Libyan people. The political prisoners were held incommunicado. Unofficial circles calculated that there had been as many as a thousand persons arrested; this, at the rate of one in prison for every 20,000 Libyans made the country the most politically confined in the world.

Side by side with the arrests popular committees were appearing, mostly in university faculties and other educational institutions, to remove bureaucrats and 'passive and obstructionist elements'. Their actions were to be confirmed by the R.C.C.; but meanwhile a tussle for control of the committees seemed to be developing between the Ministry of Education and the Arab Socialist Union. Some observers saw in the cultural revolution the first expression of popular initiative and the first attempts of the lowly to bring down hierarchies of authority. But popular committees were precluded from operating within government ministries, the bastions of bureaucracy. Student committees removed staff, censored text books and tried to revise their courses; other committees pruned the stock of a few bookshops and demoted men from executive positions in para-statal bodies. In Benghazi students waded into the congestion at the docks and claimed to devise a system that would clear the backlog; Tripoli agricultural students marched out of classrooms and towards agricultural schemes on the land. It was difficult to know how sustained this movement would be, and what results it would produce, within the system of R.C.C. supervision, and proceeding as it did side by side with police repression, and as one of its instruments.

By now Libya's internal security apparatus, modelled on Egypt's and installed by members of Egypt's mokhabarat, comprised several overlapping but autonomously directed intelligence machines. After the arrest of one group suspected of counter-revolutionary plotting there had been disclosures of torture by soldiers commanded by Free Officers. (It was considered too dangerous to bring them to book, for this might split the army). Less sensational but more pervasive was the system of informers and the emergence of groups of organised government supporters who played a strategic if sycophantic role carrying out the tenor of Gadafi's speeches to the letter, and reporting to him only what they knew he wanted to hear. The popular committees had both a positive and negative aspect: on the one hand they might very well succeed in provoking a response from ordinary people within the limits of manoeuvre allowed by the R.C.C; but on the other they could be equivalent to the security apparatus, denouncing and rooting out any who had doubts about the methods of the army regime.